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# REAGAN REAFFIRMS SECRECY ON EFFORT TO FREE HOSTAGES

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 10 — President Reagan today affirmed his policy of secrecy about the Administration's efforts to free American hostages in Lebanon, and he rejected Congressional demands that he disclose details of dealings with Iran.

Trying to counter suggestions of a sharp split in the Administration, the White House said the actions toward Iran had the support of Secretary of State George P. Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger.

The White House statement emphasized that "no U.S. law has been or will be violated" and that "our policy of not making concessions to terrorists remains intact."

In another development, Mr. Reagan notified Congress that he would extend a 1979 executive order freezing Iranian assets in the United States. The order, which has been extended annually, expired Friday.

## McFarlane Defends Shift

In what appeared to be a further attempt to justify contacts with Iran, Robert C. McFarlane, Mr. Reagan's former national security adviser, said it was of "enormous importance" for the United States "to engender a stable relationship with the Iranian Government."

In a four-page statement that did not touch on whether the United States was facilitating arms shipments to Teheran, Mr. McFarlane said secret diplomacy was crucial in preparing for a new relationship with Iran if the leadership there was ready for it. It was unclear if the statement, which was inserted into a speech by Mr. McFarlane today in Atlanta, had been coordinated with the White House.

"The United States has vital security interests in the Middle East that are entirely compatible with the security interests in Iran," Mr. McFarlane said today, 10 days after a Beirut publication reported that he had made a secret trip to Iran.

## Executive Privilege May Be Cited

The developments came as White House officials said Mr. Reagan might invoke executive privilege if Congress tried to examine secret contacts with Iran to free the hostages in Lebanon.

The officials said the action was one of several that might be taken in the event of a Congressional investigation.

It has been reported in the last week that the United States tried to facilitate the shipment of military spare parts to Iran in return for assistance in gaining the release of the American captives.

White House officials also said today that they were losing hope that an arrangement that led to the recent freeing of one hostage, David P. Jacobsen, might result in the release of others.

The White House spokesman, Larry Speakes, said that "our expectations were not met — our hopes were dashed once again."

Without blaming the press directly, Mr. Speakes said there was "no doubt" that press coverage the last week had been a factor in the inability to free other Americans.

"It obviously has had its impact, yes," he said, adding that it would be impossible to determine the full effect of the press reports until the hostages were released.

Mr. Reagan met today with senior foreign policy and national security advisers in what appeared to be an attempt to quell suggestions that Mr. Shultz and Mr. Weinberger opposed a policy of trading spare parts for the hostages.

"What they decided is that they need a little more time to try to gain the hostages' release, and to wait that time until they talk about it," said a senior Administration official.

Besides Mr. Shultz and Mr. Weinberger, those present included Vice President Bush; Attorney General Edwin Meese 3d; William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence; Donald T. Regan, the White House chief of staff; Vice Adm. John M. Poindexter, the President's national security adviser, and Mr. Poindexter's deputy, Alton G. Keel Jr.

Aides to Mr. Shultz suggested on Saturday that there were deep strains between the Secretary of State and the White House because Mr. Shultz had opposed a covert American mission to Iran and had not been included in dis-

cussions about it. The aides suggested that he was considering resigning, but department spokesmen called such reports speculative.

A statement issued by Mr. Speakes on behalf of Mr. Reagan said the meeting had been prompted by the concern over the remaining hostages and fear that the "spate" of press reports since Mr. Jacobsen's release had put them at risk.

The statement said the officials had also discussed "broad policy concerns in the Middle East and Persian Gulf."

"While the specific decisions discussed at the meeting can not be divulged, the President did ask that it be re-emphasized that no U.S. law has been or will be violated and that our policy of not making concessions to terrorists remains intact," it said.

"The President made it clear to all

that he appreciated their support and efforts to gain the release of all the hostages," it went on. "Stressing the fact that the hostages' lives are at stake, the President asked his advisers to insure that their departments refrain from making comments or speculating on these matters."

The statement, suggesting that Mr. Reagan's top aides were all in agreement, said pointedly that "as has been the case in similar meetings with the President and his senior advisers on this matter, there was unanimous support for the President."

## Possibility of Investigation

Some legislators have indicated that the Congressional Intelligence committees might investigate whether the National Security Council circumvented restrictions on covert operations.

In sharply worded criticism today, Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, the Senate Democratic leader, insisted that the White House consult Congress on its dealings with Iran.

"It appears to be very amateurish on the part of the Administration and was a very serious mistake," he said of the reported contact with Iran. "The Administration has seriously damaged its credibility at home and overseas."